

Mission San Cosme del Tucsón
Tucson, Pima County
Arizona

HABS No. ARIZ-12

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Arizona

Historic American Buildings Survey
Prepared at Washington Headquarters
for District of Arizona.

MISSION SAN COSME DEL TUCSÓN
Tucson, Pima County, Arizona

Owner: Brick Manufacturing Plant, same address.

Date of Erection: Probably late 18th Century.

Architect:

Builder: (Probably under direction of Padre Garces)

Present Condition: In very advanced state of ruin and disintegration, partly promoted by treasure-hunters' digging. Ruined walls of the 2-story structure stand a few feet in height, but only faint traces of the other structures can be found.

Number of Stories: One section of wall stands about 10 feet high and has beam holes marking the second floor level.

Materials of Construction: Adobe brick, wood beams.

Other Existing Records: "Bartlett's Personal Narratives of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua", D. Appleton and Co., New York City, 1854, Vol. II, facing page 292, drawing.

Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society collection:

Sketch by John Spring, 1872.

Photo by Haynes, 1891.

Photo by Reynolds, 1891.

Photo by Hartman, 1900.

Photo by Penny, 1921.

Photo by Munk, 1925.

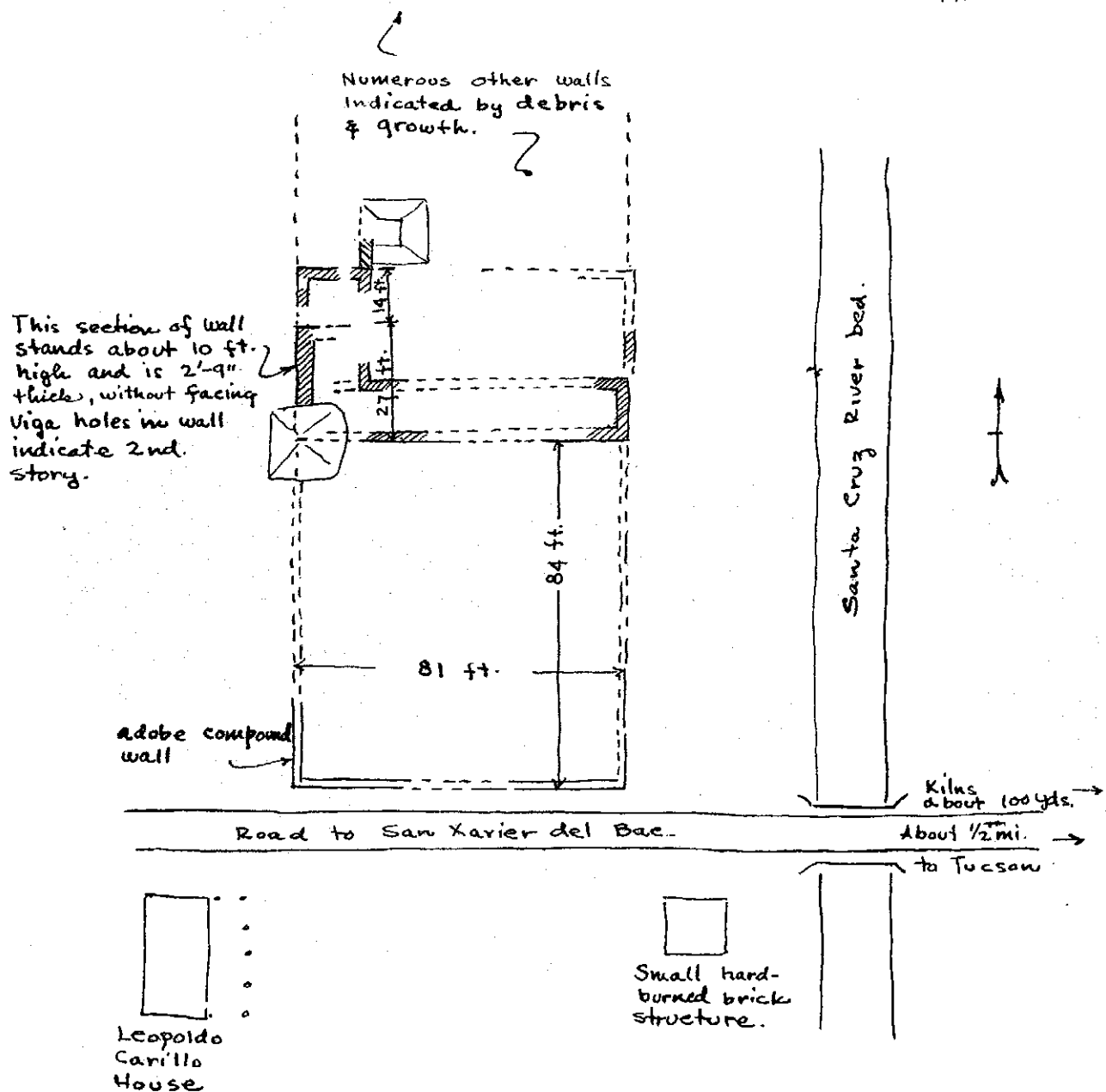
Published written records:

"Tucson - the Old Pueblo", Frank C. Lockwood,
pp. 21 - 24.

"Rim of Christendom" - Herbert E. Bolton,
pp. 395 and 503.

(See newspaper article attached)

John P. Orrell
5/3/29



RUINS OF SAN COSME DEL TUSCÓN.
Notes made at Site by John P. O'Neill
(Dimensions paced)

March 3- 1937.

ANCIENT CHURCH BECOMES BRICK

Crumbling Walls Taken to Kilns to Make New Tucson Homes

By BERNICE COSULICH

Bones of conquistadores and dust of probably the first industrial school in the United States are being pressed into bricks today, which tomorrow will build Tucson homes and business blocks. Such is the march of time as it is actually taking place in Tucson. Dreams and achievements of 150 years ago contribute, through their powdery dust, to the plans and growths of modern Tucson.

Across the Santa Cruz river, in Menlo Park, stand a few crumbling walls, all that is left of the San Cosme del Tucson mission and industrial school built by Father Garces after 1768. Nearby are modern brick factories whose workmen scoop up the pulverized earth and leave exposed to the sun the bone fragments of Tucson's first aristocrats or "gente de razon."

If those walls, bones or dust could talk they would tell a fascinating chapter from early Arizona history. They might say:

"Do you remember that hot-blooded young priest, Father Garces, and how Captain de Anza used to come galloping up from Tubac to talk over with him the plans for the first overland route from New Spain to the California coast?"

"Mind the time our school was a beehive of activity with Indians and white men busy in the kitchens, granary, tannery, carpenter shop, a smithy flailing away with hammers, the soap vats gurgling and the tallow setting about the candle wicks, while the weavers tamped the warp and woof in their looms?"

"Think of the soft evening shadows under the arched porches, the scent of fruit trees in bloom, the murmur of evening prayers mingled with the stream's soft talk."

"Do you recall the sadness of everyone when intelligence was brought that Father Garces had been killed at Yuca in 1781? And the fear when Apaches attacked? And the flight of the Franciscans when Spain decreed in 1827 that they must go and the paintings were hastily taken to Inuris and the copper bells no longer rang for mass?"

Not Half the Story

They might say all these things and yet not tell half the story which can be gleaned here and there from pictures and documents at the Arizona Pioneers' Historical society. Yet another portion of

its history, discovered only yesterday, is that Indian red-on-brown pottery made about 1100 A. D. can be found in the mission refuse heap. William H. Kelly of the Gila Pueblo at Globe dug out of the bank, which the Santa Cruz has cut, those pottery fragments which he says may have been made by ancestors of the Papagoes before 1400, or may have been fashioned by an entirely different group of tribesmen who lived along the river before ever Papago people came this way.

Moderns should wipe from their minds all the present roads, cities and boundary lines, thinking instead of a vast region isolated and unmapped, of those here struggling to bring white men's civilization for the first time to the desert.

At Foot of Mountain

Everyone knows of Coronado's exploring trip in Arizona, of Father Kino's establishing missions and visitas in Mexico and Arizona and of Captain de Anza's thrilling overland trip to California. But few know that the first town-site

of Tucson was across the Santa Cruz river under the shadow of Sentinel peak (popularly called "A" mountain), or that an elaborate industrial school existed there beside the first Spanish mission.

Papago Indian jacales or houses surrounded by cultivated lands along the Santa Cruz attracted the Spaniards when they ventured north from the fort at Tubac. Tucson was then the last outpost of civilization. Father Kino had established a mission at San Xavier del Bac, and priests who followed him made this northern-most point their last stopping place before turning southward again. Between 1764 and 1767, Padre Espinosa reported 331 Indians at Tucson "five leagues north of Bac," but mentions no white men. But "with the coming of Elizonde's force of Catalans, the re-occupation of the Presidio" at Tucson brought many white men.

One Was Padre Garces

Padre Garces was one of the Spaniards. He came to Tucson in 1768, looked over the valley, felt the "gente de razon" should have something more presentable for their civilizing center and petitioned for a mission. Authorization came and probably the young Spaniard bent all his energies to building church and school to still his impatience that officials in Mexico City were so slow in granting his friend, Captain de Anza, permission to make the overland trip to California. Certain it is from both their writings that they hatched the overland plan together as early as 1769, but had to wait, not very patiently or gracefully, until 1774 before they could start.

One may, therefore, assume that most of the mission-school build-

ing was done between 1768 and 1774, for after that Garces was with de Anza to or from California for two different trips and was killed by Yuma Indians July 19, 1781. However, he probably left behind sufficient building plans and instructions to keep his fellow priests and all their Indian workmen busy during his absences.

Bartlett's drawings of the mission-school and various documents show it as an elaborate affair. Arricivita, writing in 1791, says there was at Tucson a church built of brick with a dome, houses of adobe and walls for the protection of the people. This church was known as the church of Nuestro Senor de Esquipula. He further states that after

Don Hugo O'Connor's official visit of inspection along the northern border of Spanish occupation the Presidio of Tubac was ordered moved to Tucson and this new fort was built across to the east from the mission-school and was kept strongly staffed until 1820 while the little river mission was abandoned.

Described Structure

Other historians write that the brick mission of San Cosme del Tucson facing south, was 20 by 35 feet, had a faulted roof with a dome, was plastered inside and out, the inner walls covered with frescoes similar to those at San Xavier, paintings and statues of saints, and in the tower bells cast of "copper

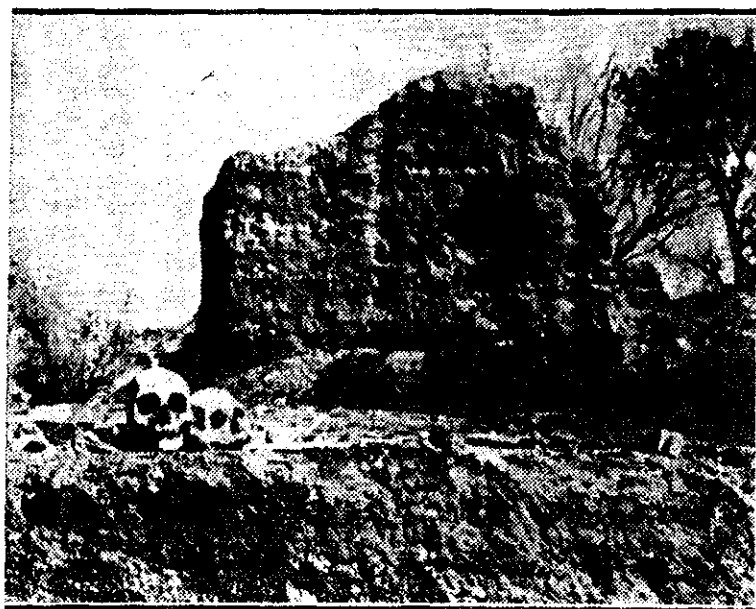
mined in the Guachapa (Santa Rita) mountains." Close beside the church was the great adobe building, some of the ruined walls of which still stand, which housed the padres and portions of the school. This building was two stories high, with arched second-story windows, a corridor of arches on the north, gardens below and at the western end the Capilla de Nuestro Senor de Esquipula. Scattered about within the walled area, the only entrance for which was through the oak-doored gate at the south, were kitchens, granary, auxiliary buildings of adobe for servants, tannery, carpenter shop, smithy, soap and candle factory, buildings where spinning, weaving and other simple trades were taught. There were two cemeteries, one on the west for Spanish folk and the one now dug out for bricks, and another for Christians Indians to the north which must be close to the brick company's kilns. Beyond the wall lay the Indian village "wherein dwelt the Indian neophytes" and just across the Camio de la Mission or the road which connected San Xavier del Bac with the Santa Cruz mission.

Where Early Spaniards Worshipped and Died



San Cosme del Tucson mission and industrial school was begun across the Santa Cruz river from Tucson after 1768 by Father Graces, who with Captain de Anza planned within its walls the first over-land trip ever made by white men between Arizona and California.

All that was left of the school and priest's home in 1891 may be seen in the upper picture taken by A. S. Reynolds of Oracle in that year and loaned by the Pioneers' Historical society. The mission, all torn away, was at the left of the picture. Today only the fragments of wall shown in the lower right remains and some of the bones uncovered by modern brick makers in the Spanish cemetery are shown piled on a bank near the crumbling walls. The whole region is strewn with bones of the Spanish colonists.



How long this picturesque community actually flourished no one knows. Certainly the building of the fort city of Tucson and the moving there of soldiers from Tubac provided homes for the Spaniards not connected with the church. But the expulsion of the Franciscans in 1827 must have marked its decline and probably Apache warfare, the unsettled conditions after the Gadsden purchase when Mexicans relocated across the then ephemeral line so they could be in their own country, finished the mission's use. With Tucson growing on the other side of the river and pioneers pressed for building materials they probably began hauling off the bricks of the mission, the hand-turned wooden grills from the priest's windows and beams from the church.

The old buildings were put to many uses through their declining years, but in 1891, when A. S. Reynolds of Oracle took the picture which illustrates this story, Sam Hughes was using the mission school to stable his stock and the picture show "where openings had been cut in the school by Hughes for his stock." Reynolds also records that the earthquake in 1887 shook down much of the church and school which still stood. But even in 1871 when the artist, John A. Spring, made a drawing for the Enterprize magazine he wrote on the picture's margins "it is a total wreck of a once magnificent structure."

The mission had many names,

documents show, having been called San Jose de Tucson, Old San Xavier del Bac, Escala Pura, Esquipula and San Cosme de Tucson.

Modern Tucsonans will be interested to know that Father Stoner reproduced, as nearly as possible, the old mission as shown in Baile's

lett's drawing and this modern replica. St. John, the Evangelist Catholic church, stands at 3522 South Seventh avenue. It is across from the U. S. Veteran's hospital. One of the old beams which had been in the original structure was used in the new church.